

TENNESSEE SYMBOLS AND HONORS

Official Seal of the State

Even before Tennessee achieved statehood efforts were made by local governmental organizations to procure official seals. Reliable historians have assumed that as early as 1772 the Articles of the Agreement of the Watauga Association authorized the use of a seal. The Legislature of the state of Franklin, by an official act, provided "for procuring a Great Seal for this State," and there is also evidence that a seal was intended for the Territory South of the River Ohio. The secretary of that territory requested the assistance of Thomas Jefferson in March, 1792, in "suggesting a proper device" for a seal. There is no direct evidence, however, that a seal was ever made for any of these predecessors of Tennessee.

When Tennessee became a state, the Constitution of 1796 made provision for the preparation of a seal. Each subsequent constitution made similar provisions and always in the same words as the first. This provision is (Constitution of 1796, Article II, Section 15; Constitution of 1835, Article III, Section 15; Constitution of 1870, Article III, Section 15) as follows:

There shall be a seal of this state, which shall be kept by the governor, and used by him officially, and shall be called "The Great Seal of the State of Tennessee."

In spite of the provision of the Constitution of 1796, apparently no action was taken until September 25, 1801. On that date committees made up of members from both the Senate and the House of Representatives were appointed. One of these was to "prepare a device and motto" for a seal, while the other was to contract with a suitable person to cut a seal and press for the use of the state.



Original State Seal



Official State Seal

The committee appointed to prepare a design for the state seal recommended that:

...the said seal shall be a circle, two inches and a quarter in diameter, that the circumference of the circle contain the words THE GREAT SEAL OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that in the lower part of said circumference be inserted Feb. 6th, 1796, the date of the Constitution of this state; that in the inside of the upper part of said circle, be set in numerical letters XVI, the number of the state in chronological order; that under the base of the upper semicircle, there be the word AGRICULTURE; that above said base, there be the figure of a plow, sheaf of wheat and cotton plant; that in the lower part of the lower semicircle, there be the word COMMERCE, and said lower semicircle shall also contain the figure of a boat and boatman.

The other committee reported that it had contracted with William and Matthew Atkinson to make the seal and press.

The seal and press were delivered to Gov. Archibald Roane in April 1802 and were used for the first time April 24, 1802, on a document ordering payment for them. Before this time, both John Sevier and Archibald Roane had used their personal seal in official documents. This seal continued in use under seven governors until 1829 when Gov. William Hall was the last governor to use it. Then, during the second series of administrations of Gov. William Carroll, a different seal came into use, though there is no record of its authorization. This second seal was only one and three-quarters inches wide and the date "Feb. 6th," was omitted. The boat, differing greatly in design from the original, was pointed in the opposite direction. The seal was at variance with the original in other respects as well. It remained in use from 1829 until the administrations of William Brownlow from 1865 to 1869.

A close examination of official documents bearing the Great Seal, particularly between 1855 and 1875, indicates that the seal now being used was introduced during the administration of Gov. William Brownlow. Only one document, dated 1865, was found containing the seal attributed to the Brownlow administration. Instead, examination of Brownlow documents of 1866 and 1867 revealed the use of two seals, evidently used simultaneously. One seal appears to be the same as that affixed to documents signed by Governors Brownlow, Senter, Porter and Hawkins.

Evidently, the so-called "Brownlow Seal" was used only in 1865, when it was replaced by two other seals which were only slightly different from each other. The seal now used was the larger of the two and appears to have been the only one used since the last year of Brownlow's administration. The current seal was officially adopted in 1987 by the 95th General Assembly, Public Chapter 402.

State Flags

Flag of the State of Tennessee

The state flag was designed by LeRoy Reeves of the Third Regiment, Tennessee Infantry, who made the following explanation of his design:



Flag of Tennessee
Artist's Original Sketch

The three stars are of pure white, representing the three grand divisions of the state. They are bound together by the endless circle of the blue field, the symbol being three bound together in one—an indissoluble trinity. The large field is crimson. The final blue bar relieves the sameness of the crimson field and prevents the flag from showing too much crimson when hanging limp. The white edgings contrast more strongly the other colors.

This flag was adopted as the official flag of the state of Tennessee by an act of the General Assembly passed and approved April 17, 1905. The design of the flag was described by that act, Chapter 498 of the Public Acts of 1905, as follows:

An oblong flag or banner in length one and two thirds times its width, the large or principal field of same to be of color red, but said flag or banner ending at its free or outer end in a perpendicular bar of blue, of uniform width, running from side to side—that is to say from top to bottom of said flag or banner—and separated from the red field by a narrow margin or stripe of white of uniform width; the width of the white stripe to be one fifth that of the blue bar, and the total width of the bar and stripe together to be equal to one-eighth of the width of the flag. In the center of the red field shall be a smaller circular field of blue, separated from the surrounding red field shall be a smaller circular field of blue, separated from the surrounding red field by a circular margin or stripe of white of uniform width and of the same width as the straight margin or stripe first mentioned. The breadth or diameter of the circular blue field, exclusive of the white margin, shall be equal to one-half of the width of the flag.

Inside the circular blue field shall be three five-pointed stars of white distributed at equal intervals around a point, the center of the blue field, and of such size and arrangement that one point of each star shall approach as closely as practicable without actually touching one point of each of the other two around the center point of the field; and the two outer points of each star shall approach as nearly as practicable without actually touching the periphery of the blue field. The arrangement of the three stars shall be such that the centers of no two stars shall be in a line parallel to either the side or end of the flag, but intermediate between same; and the highest star shall be the one nearest the upper confined corner of the flag.

Flag of the General Assembly

The flag of the General Assembly was adopted by the 90th General Assembly in 1978. The banner was designed by art and design student Sheila Adkins, a student at Knoxville's Fulton High School. Her design was chosen from among those submitted by numerous students from across the state. The designer chose white for purity, blue to denote respect for Tennessee, red as the traditional color for America; stars to symbolize the state's three Grand Divisions; wheat for agricultural heritage; and the gavel for the power of the people vested in the state's legislative body.



Flag of the General Assembly

Flag of the Governor

No act has been passed by the General Assembly establishing an official flag for the governor, but in 1939, at the request of the adjutant general, one was designed by the U.S. War Department. The central design on the flag is the crest of the National Guard of Tennessee, which is described in a letter from the secretary of war, dated May 28, 1923, as:

...on a wreath argent and gules, upon amount vert a hickory tree properly charged with three mullets one and two argent, the description of which is as follows:

The state of Andrew Jackson—"Old Hickory"—Tennessee, was the Sixteenth state admitted to the union, the original 13 plus 3, and the state flag bears three white stars. The predominant original white population within the state was of English origin, and the twists of the wreath are accordingly white and red. This design was placed upon a red background in the corners of which are placed a 5-pointed star representing the fact that the governor of the state by virtue of his office automatically becomes commander in chief of the National Guard of that state.



Flag of the Governor

The first paragraph means that on a wreath of silver (or white) and red is a green hill upon which is a hickory tree bearing three five-pointed stars, each one separated from the other two, and all three silver (or white).

Historian

The office of state historian was created in 1955 by the General Assembly. Dr. Robert H. White, the first appointed state historian, served in that capacity from 1955 until his death in 1970. During his appointment he compiled the eight-volume series, *Messages of the Governors*, a record of Tennessee's governmental affairs from 1796-1907, which was published by the Tennessee Historical Commission. Dr. Dan H. Robison served as state historian from 1970 to 1972, Stanley F. Horn from 1972 until his death in 1980, and Wilma Dykeman from 1981 to 2002.

The position, an honorary one, is now held by Walter Durham, appointed by Gov. Don Sundquist in 2002. It is the responsibility of the state historian to prepare for publication and to disseminate Tennessee historical data and to conduct negotiations for historical publications.



Walter Durham *State Historian*

Retired Gallatin businessman and public affairs activist, Walter T. Durham has been engaged in writing Tennessee history for the past thirty-five years. Holder of the B.A. and M.A. degrees from Vanderbilt University, he is a member of the Phi Beta Kappa and Pi Sigma Alpha honorary societies. During World War II, he served with the Air Force in Italy and Africa. He has received national honors in the business community for his leadership in the manufacture and sales of building materials. A practiced public speaker, he is a former chairman of the Tennessee Historical Commission and past president of the Tennessee Historical Society. Durham's writing first reached public print outside of Gallatin when, at the age of fifteen, he became Sumner County correspondent for the daily Nashville Banner. In 1969 he published *The Great Leap Westward*, the first of his seventeen Tennessee books, four of which were done with collaborators. His works have received several awards. He has written more

than one hundred articles for magazines, journals, and newspapers, and he has contributed entries to Simon and Schuster's *Encyclopedia of the Confederacy*, 1993, and the *Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, 1998. He has written chapters for other books and a number of book reviews. His support of libraries, archives, and education earned the Library Leadership Award from Vanderbilt University, the John H. Thweatt Archival Advancement Award from the Society of Tennessee Archivists, and the Glass Apple from Vanderbilt's Peabody College. A former member of the board of trustees of Monmouth College (IL) and the alumni board of Vanderbilt, Durham was chairman of the year-long celebration of the Gallatin Bicentennial, 1802-2002. Governor Don Sundquist appointed him State Historian in 2002. Advocating a candid, unadorned view of history, Durham noted, "We can see much of what is good and bad about America in Tennessee history, but rest assured, there is more glory than shame."

Slogan

In 1965, the Tennessee General Assembly adopted as the state's official slogan, "Tennessee—America at Its Best." (Chapter 33, Section 1, Public Acts, 1965).

Motto

The state of Tennessee's motto is "Agriculture and Commerce," taken from the wording used on the state seal. The motto was officially adopted in 1987 by Public Chapter 402 by the 95th General Assembly.

Nicknames

Tennessee has had several nicknames, but the most popular is "The Volunteer State." The nickname originated during the War of 1812 when thousands of Tennesseans enlisted in response to Governor Willie Blount's call for volunteers.

Other nicknames include the "Big Bend State," which refers to the Indian name of the Tennessee River; "The River with the Big Bend"; and "Hog and Hominy State," now obsolete but formerly applied because "the corn and pork products of Tennessee were in such great proportions between 1830 and 1840"; and "The Mother of Southwestern Statesmen," because Tennessee furnished the United States three presidents and a number of other leaders who served with distinction in high government office.

Tennesseans sometimes are referred to as "Volunteers," "Big Benders" and "Butternuts." The first two are derived from the nickname of the state, while the tag of "Butternuts" was first applied to Tennessee soldiers during the War Between the States because of the tan color of their uniforms. Later, it sometimes was applied to people across the entire state.

Plants

In 1919, the General Assembly, by Senate Joint Resolution 13, provided that a state flower be chosen by the school children of Tennessee. Accordingly, a vote was taken and the passion flower was chosen. In 1933, however, the Legislature adopted Senate Joint Resolution 53 designating the iris as the "State Flower of Tennessee," but failed to formally rescind the designation of the passion flower as the state flower. To eliminate this confusion, in 1973 the 88th General Assembly, by Chapter 16, designated the passion flower the state wildflower and the iris the state cultivated flower.

Wildflower

The passion flower, genus *Passiflora*, which grows wild in the southern part of the United States and in South America, is also commonly known as the maypop, the wild apricot and the ocoee. The last is the Indian name that has also been applied to the Ocoee River and valley. The Indians prized the ocoee as the most abundant and beautiful of all their flowers. The passion flower received its name from the early Christian missionaries to South America, who saw in the various parts of the curiously constructed flower symbols of the Crucifixion—the three crosses, the crown of thorns, nails and cords.



Passion Flower

Cultivated Flower

The iris, genus *Iridaceae*, is an herbaceous perennial of which there are about 170 species, including several North American varieties, the most common of which is the Blue Flag. While there are several different colors among the iris, and the act naming the iris as the state flower did not name a particular color, by common acceptance the purple iris is considered the state flower.



Iris

Fruit

The tomato, scientifically known as the *Lycopersicon lycopersicum*, was designated as Tennessee's official state fruit by Chapter 154 of the Public Acts of 2003.



Tomato

Tree

The tulip poplar was designated as the official state tree of Tennessee by Public Chapter 204 of the Acts of the 1947 General Assembly. The act stated that, as no state tree had ever before been designated, the adoption of an official tree seemed appropriate. The tulip poplar was chosen “because it grows from one end of the state to the other” and “was extensively used by the pioneers of the state to construct houses, barns, and other necessary farm buildings.”



Tulip Poplar Bloom

The following description of the tulip poplar, the botanical name of which is *Liriodendron Tulipifera*, is taken from *The Complete Guide to North American Trees*:

“Perhaps the most stately tree of our range, it sometimes reaches a height of 200 feet with a stem as regular as though turned on a lathe and frequently showing 50 to 100 feet of trunk without a branch. The twigs are smooth, brownish gray, becoming cracked into a regular network of shallow, firm ridges; an old trunk broken into deep, rough ridges. Its leaves are very smooth and shining with a broad notch at the tip, usually four-lobbed, 2 to 8 inches long. Its flowers are tulip-like, green orange, 1 to 3 inches deep. The fruit is cone-like hanging on through the year, and is 2 to 3 inches long.”

State Animals

Bird



Mockingbird

According to the *Nashville Banner* of April 16, 1933, the mockingbird, *Mimus polyglottos*, was selected on April 11, 1933, as state bird of Tennessee in an election conducted by the Tennessee Ornithological Society. The choice was confirmed by Senate Joint Resolution 51 adopted by the General Assembly in 1933.

The mockingbird is akin to the brown thrasher and the catbird. It is ashen gray above, with darker, white-edged wings and whitish underparts; its length, inclusive of the long tail, is about 10 inches. One of the finest singers among North American birds, it possesses a melodious song of its own, and is especially noted for its skill in mimicking the songs of other birds.

Game Bird

The bobwhite quail, genus *Colinus virginianus*, was designated as the official state game bird by Public Chapter 775 of the Acts of the 95th General Assembly. The bobwhite, also known as the partridge, is considered one of the finest game birds in the world. It is a short-tailed chunky brown bird, usually 8 to 10 inches long. The male has a white throat and a white stripe above the eye, while the female has a buffy throat and eye stripe. In spring the male's clearly whistled *bob white* is answered by the female's four-syllable whistle. This gamebird lays from 10 to 20 pure white eggs, more than almost any other bird.



Bobwhite Quail

Fish

Tennessee's official sport fish is the largemouth bass, as designated by Public Chapter 489 of the Acts of the 95th General Assembly.

The largemouth *Micropterus salmoides*, is probably the most popular and sought after fish in the state. Sometimes referred to as "bigmouth," its popularity is due to a strong fighting ability, relatively large size and pleasing flavor. The Tennessee largemouth can grow to 14 or 15 inches by its third year and may be found in most of the lakes and streams in the state.



Largemouth Bass

The state commercial fish is the channel catfish, *Ictalurus lacustris*, which was also designated by Public Chapter 489 as enacted by the 95th General Assembly. The channel catfish, sometimes known as "spotted cat" or "fiddler," is widely stocked and reared in farm ponds. It may be found in most Tennessee streams and many lakes. The channel catfish is a bottom-feeder and current feeder, generally taken by still fishing.

Wild Animal



Raccoon

By House Joint Resolution 156, the 87th General Assembly adopted the raccoon as Tennessee's wild animal. The raccoon, *Procyon lotor*, is a furry animal that has a bushy, ringed tail and a band of black hair around its eyes which looks like a mask. Raccoons, often called coons, eat fish and frogs that they catch in rivers and streams. Raccoons living in Tennessee measure from 30 to 38 inches long, including their tails. They weigh from 12 to 25 pounds. Most males are larger than females. Raccoons walk like bears, with all four feet on the ground, and are good swimmers.

Insects

The official state insects were designated by Public Chapter 292 of the Acts of 1975. They are the well-known firefly, or lightning bug beetle, and the ladybeetle, more commonly known as the ladybug or ladybird beetle.

The firefly, or lightning bug beetle, is the popular name of the luminescent insects of the *Lampyridae* family. In Tennessee, *Photinus pyralis* is the most familiar species. Their extraordinary light is generated in special organs and it is most often white, yellow, orange, greenish blue or reddish.

Rather small, they are blackish, brown, yellow or reddish in color. In certain species the females remain in the larvae state and are called glowworms.

Most fireflies produce short rhythmic flashes which provide a signaling system to bring the sexes together and also a protective mechanism to repel predators.

The ladybeetle, more commonly called ladybug or ladybird beetle, is the popular name given the *Coccinella* 7. This beetle was dedicated to the Virgin Mary and called "Beetle of Our Lady." They are around four-tenths of an inch long, brightly colored, round, with the popular ladybug having four black spots on each wing.

Ladybugs are sold to farmers to control insect pests because they are important aphid predators. The life cycle is about four weeks as the ladybug larvae passes through four growth stages feeding on insects and insect eggs.

In folk medicine ladybug beetles were used to cure various diseases including colic and the measles.



Firefly



Ladybug

Agricultural Insect

The official state agricultural insect is the honeybee and was designated by Public Chapter 725 of the Acts of 1990.

The honeybee, *Apis mellifera*, is a social, honey-producing insect that plays a fundamental role in the production of all crops. It is also very popular for its production of honey and beeswax.

The honeybee plays a vital economic role in Tennessee through its pollination of various crops, trees, and grasses. The honeybee is the only insect that can be moved for the express purpose of pollination.



Honeybee

Butterfly

The Zebra Swallowtail, *Eurytides marcellus*, was designated as Tennessee's official butterfly by Public Chapter 896 of the 99th General Assembly in 1995. This beautiful, winged insect has black and white stripes that run the length of its body with red and blue spots on its lower back. The swallowtail grows from a tiny egg into a caterpillar that eventually molts into its pupal stage and is transformed into this striking butterfly that can be found throughout most of the United States.



Zebra Swallowtail

Amphibian

The Tennessee Cave Salamander, *Gyrinophilu palleucus*, was named official state amphibian by Public Chapter 367 of the 99th General Assembly in 1995. This large, cave-dwelling salamander has three red external gills, a broad, flat head with small eyes and a tail fin. It is most often found in limestone caves that contain streams in central and southeast Tennessee.



Tennessee Cave Salamander



Box Turtle

Reptile

The Eastern Box Turtle, *Terrapene carolina*, was designated official state reptile by Public Chapter 367 of the 99th General Assembly in 1995. This peaceful creature usually reaches a length of less than six inches and has a shell of black or brown with spots of yellow, orange and red. This reptile usually lives between 30 to 60 years and never ventures far from its place of birth.

Horse



Tennessee Walking Horse

The Tennessee Walking Horse was named the official state horse by Public Chapter 596 of the 101st General Assembly in 2000.

The Tennessee Walking Horse is bred mainly from Standardbred, Morgan, Thoroughbred, and American Saddlebred stock. The three, easy-riding gaits of this breed: the flat-foot walk, the running walk, and the canter, are all natural, inherited characteristics, making this breed one of the smoothest riding horses in the world.

This breed was a practical utility horse in the beginning and evolved into a pleasure horse with its gentle ride. Tennessee Walking Horses generally range from 14.3 to 17 hands and weigh 900 to 1,200 pounds.

State Gem

The pearl, taken from mussels in the fresh water rivers of the state, is the official state gem, as designated by 1979 Public Chapter 192 of the 91st General Assembly.

During the years between 1882 and 1914, beautiful pearls were taken from many of the state's streams, from the Pigeon and Holston in the east to the Forked Deer and Obion in the west. The Caney Fork in Middle Tennessee was noted for its pearl-bearing mussels, and "pearling" was a favorite sport for

young people on Sunday afternoons at the turn of the century.

Tennessee river pearls are of all colors and they are “natural” as the mussel made them—all pearl, all the way through. They have been found in various shapes—spherical, pear-shaped, and baroque or irregular.

After World War I, dams were built on many of the rivers, and the mussels lost their swift and shallow shoals. Also, the waters became more toxic and pearling became unprofitable. Today, pearling exists as a byproduct of shell harvests which supply the cultivated pearl industry of Japan.

Tennessee river pearls are among the most beautiful and durable in the world. At Camden in West Tennessee, these river pearls are collected and crafted into rings, cuff links, stick pins, and other jewelry.



Tennessee River Pearls

State Rocks

Limestone, found just about everywhere in Tennessee, was designated the official state rock' by the General Assembly with the passage of Senate Bill 281, on Feb. 28, 1979, and the governor's approval on March 13, 1979. Tennessee marble, as the metamorphic version of limestone is known, is widely used in public and private buildings. About 10 years earlier, on March 5, 1969, the General Assembly, in adopting House Joint Resolution 42, gave similar status to agate, a cryptocrystalline quartz. This semiprecious gemstone is found in only a few areas of the state.



Agate



Limestone

State Songs

My Homeland, Tennessee

In 1925, the 64th General Assembly, by House Joint Resolution 36, adopted *My Homeland, Tennessee* as an official state song. The words of this song were written by Nell Grayson Taylor and the music by Roy Lamont Smith.

First Verse

*O Tennessee, that gave us birth,
To thee our hearts bow down.
For thee our love and loyalty
Shall weave a fadeless crown.
Thy purple hills our cradle was;
Thy fields our mother breast
Beneath thy sunny bended skies,
Our childhood days were blessed.*

Third Verse

*Could we forget our heritage
Of heroes strong and brave?
Could we do aught but cherish it,
Un sullied to the grave?
Ah no! the State where Jackson sleeps,
Shall ever peerless be.
We glory in thy majesty;
Our homeland, Tennessee.*

Second Verse

*'Twas long ago our fathers came,
A free and noble band,
Across the mountain's frowning heights
To seek a promised land.
And here before their raptured eyes;
In beauteous majesty:
Outspread the smiling valleys
Of the winding Tennessee.*

Chorus

*O Tennessee: Fair Tennessee:
Our love for thee can never die:
Dear homeland, Tennessee.*

When It's Iris Time In Tennessee

In 1935, *When It's Iris Time in Tennessee* by Willa Waid Newman also became an official state song. This song was adopted by the 69th General Assembly in Chapter 154 of the Public Acts.

First Verse

*Sweetness of Spring memories bring
Of a place I long to be.
Land of Sunshine calls this old heart of mine,
Come back to Tennessee.*

Chorus

*When it's Iris time down in Tennessee,
I'll be coming back to stay
Where the mockingbird sings at the break of day
A lilting love song gay.
Where the Iris grows,
Where the Harpeth flows,
That is where I long to be.
There's a picture there that lives in memory
When it's Iris time in Tennessee.*

Second Verse

*Rocks and the rills deep tinted hills,
There's no spot so dear to me.
Where'er I roam still it's my Home Sweet Home,
My own, my Tennessee.*

My Tennessee

My Tennessee by Frances Hannah Trantum was adopted as the official public school song in 1955. It was adopted by Senate Joint Resolution 35 of the 79th General Assembly.

First Verse

*Beloved state, oh state of mine,
In all the world I could not find,
Where God has strewn with lavish hand,
More natural beauty o'er the land.
From ev'ry stream and valley green
His wond'rous art is ever seen.
Ah, let my heart beat true to thee,
And swell with pride for Tennessee.*

Third Verse

*Your battles fought, and vict'ries won,
Your freedom bought and duty done,
With daughters fair, and sons so brave,
To do and dare, their deeds they gave.
Courageously, without a fear,
And won the name of volunteer.
In sacred trust, let those who will,
By being just, preserve it still.*

Second Verse

*Thy rocks and rills, and wooded hills,
My mem'ry keeps the childhood thrills
You gave to me, that I might know
The joys supreme, you could bestow.
The song of birds, the whisp'ring trees,
The low of herds, the hum of bees,
It all comes back so dear to me,
My childhood home in Tennessee.*

Chorus

*Oh, Tennessee, My Tennessee,
Thy hills and vales are fair to see,
With mountains grand, and fertile lands
There is no state more dear to me.
Thro' other climes tho I may roam,
There will be times I'll long for home,
In Tennessee, Fair Tennessee,
The land of my nativity.*

Tennessee Waltz

In 1965, *Tennessee Waltz* by Redd Stewart and Pee Wee King became an official song of the state. It was adopted by Senate Joint Resolution 9 of the 84th General Assembly.

*I was waltzing with my darlin' to the Tennessee Waltz
When an old friend I happened to see
Introduced him to my loved one and while they were waltzing
My friend stole my sweetheart from me.*

*I remember the night and the Tennessee Waltz
Now I know just how much I have lost
Yes I lost my little darlin' the night they were playing
The beautiful Tennessee Waltz.*

Rocky Top

Rocky Top, by Boudleaux and Felice Bryant, was adopted as an official song of Tennessee by Chapter 545 of the Public Acts of 1982.

First Verse

*Wish that I was on ol' Rocky Top,
down in the Tennessee hills;
Ain't no smoggy smoke on Rocky Top;
Ain't no telephone bills;
Once I had a girl on Rocky Top:
Half bear, other half cat;
Wild as a mink, but sweet as soda pop,
I still dream about that;*

Third Verse

*I've had years of cramped-up city life
Trapped like a duck in a pen;
All I know is it's a pity life
Can't be simple again.*

Second Verse

*Once two strangers climbed ol' Rocky Top,
lookin' for a moonshine still;
Strangers ain't come down from Rocky Top;
Reckon they never will;
Corn won't grow at all on Rocky Top;
Dirt's too rocky by far;
That's why all the folks on Rocky Top
get their corn from a jar;*

Chorus

*Rocky Top, you'll always be
home sweet home to me;
Good ol' Rocky Top;
Rocky Top, Tennessee;
Rocky Top, Tennessee.*

Tennessee

Tennessee by Vivian Rorie was adopted as an official song of Tennessee in 1992. It was adopted by House Joint Resolution 744 of the 97th General Assembly.

*I do not know of another state
And don't forget the rivers
Where I had rather be
Where visitors long to stay.
Than this great state I'm living in
And many have voiced in parting,
And that is Tennessee.
'I'm sure glad I passed this way.'
I love the stars dearly
You will see the cattle grazing
And there are surely three
Beside a cotton field;
That show the Grand Divisions
And there's the Grand Ole Opry
Of my home-land, Tennessee
And a feeling it's all God's will.*

*Where could you find a meadow
I have lived here all my life
With grass so vividly green?
It's where I'm going to be
Where could you find the mountains
Although I've traveled quite a bit,
With such majestic scene?
I'll still take Tennessee!*

*You will never find so bright a moon
Oh, I sure love the state I'm in:
To shine down from above
The great state of Tennessee!
You will also see the robin
The wren, and the turtle dove.*

The Pride of Tennessee

The Pride of Tennessee by Fred Congdon, Thomas Vaughn and Carol Elliot was adopted as an official song of Tennessee in 1996. It was adopted by House Joint Resolution 221 of the 99th General Assembly.

From the Smokie Mountain Mornings to the Mississippi shores
Let's take time to remember those who went before
Whose lives made a difference in the world for you and me
Their courage faith and vision are the Pride of Tennessee
Sequoyah was a Cherokee the chief of all his tribe
His people learned to read and write with the alphabet he scribed
When Tennessee became a State its Governor was clear
There was no better leader than the gallant John Sevier
From the backwoods to the Congress to his stand at the Alamo
Davy Crockett gave his life for the country he loved so

Three Presidents from Tennessee made impressions on this land
Jackson, Polk and Johnson were men who took a stand
Ida Wells Barnett fought bravely for the rights of men
When they were killed by prejudice for the color of their skin
He was drafted in the first world war though he did not want to go
His shooting skills made Alvin York a national hero

When women of Tennessee believed they had the right to vote
Ann Dallas Dudley led the fight and gave them hope
Cordell Hull had a vision for peace around the world
The United Nations where all countries' flags unfurl
From Beale Street down in Memphis to New York front page news
W.C. Handy's music made him father of the blues

Yes Courage, Faith and Vision are the Pride of Tennessee

State Poems

The poem entitled "Oh Tennessee, My Tennessee" by Naval Adm. William Lawrence was designated and adopted as the official state poem by Public Chapter 111 of the 88th General Assembly. Adm. Lawrence composed this poem while enduring a period of 60 days of solitary confinement in a North Vietnamese prisoner of war camp. Lawrence, who spent six years as a POW during the Vietnam War, is a Nashville native and is retired from the United State Navy.

*Oh Tennessee, My Tennessee
What Love and Pride I Feel for Thee.
You Proud Ole State, the Volunteer,
Your Proud Traditions I Hold Dear.*

*I Revere Your Heroes
Who Bravely Fought our Country's Foes.
Renowned Statesmen, so Wise and Strong,
Who Served our Country Well and Long.*

*I Thrill at Thought of Mountains Grand;
Rolling Green Hills and Fertile Farm Land;
Earth Rich with Stone, Mineral and Ore;
Forests Dense and Wild Flowers Galore;*

*Powerful Rivers that Bring us Light;
Deep Lakes with Fish and Fowl in Flight;
Thriving Cities and Industries;
Fine Schools and Universities;
Strong Folks of Pioneer Descent,
Simple, Honest, and Reverent.*

*Beauty and Hospitality
Are the Hallmarks of Tennessee.*

*And O'er the World as I May Roam,
No Place Exceeds my Boyhood Home.
And Oh How Much I Long to See
My Native Land, My Tennessee.*

Ambassador of Letters

Harriette Louise Bias Allen, former Director of Forensics in the Department of Dramatics and Speech at Fisk University, was named Tennessee's "Ambassador of Letters" by House Joint Resolution 222 on May 12, 1977. A native of Savannah, Georgia, Ms. Allen is widely recognized as a poetess, storyteller, and oral interpreter.

Poet Laureate

Margaret "Maggi" Britton Vaughn was designated as Tennessee's Poet Laureate for the term of her natural life by House Joint Resolution 101 of the 101st General Assembly in 1999. Vaughn, a native of Murfreesboro, had her first critically acclaimed book, *Fifty Years of Saturday Nights*, published in 1975. Some of Vaughn's other works include *Grand Ole Saturday Night*, *The Light in the Kitchen Window*, and the play, *I Wonder If Eleanor Roosevelt Ever Made a Quilt*.

Songwriting

Senate Joint Resolution 121, adopted in 2003 by the 103rd General Assembly, designated songwriting as one of Tennessee's official art forms and applauded individuals who are or who have been skillful masters of this art form.

Folk Dance

Chapter 829 of the Public Acts of 1980 designated the square dance as the official state folk dance stating, “Among the traditions (of our ancestors) that have survived intact is the Square Dance, a uniquely attractive art form that remains a vibrant and entertaining part of Tennessee folklore.”

Jamboree and Crafts Festival

The Smithville Fiddlers' Jamboree and Crafts Festival was adopted in 1997 by House Joint Resolution 24 of the 100th General Assembly as the official jamboree and crafts festival.

Tartan



State Tartan

Chapter 82 of the Public Acts of 1999 designated the state of Tennessee's official state tartan as the design adopted by the Heart of Tennessee Scottish Celebration in conjunction with all the other Scottish Societies in Tennessee. The design is a symmetrical tartan sett, using the following colors: natural white, dark green, purple, red, and dark blue.

Artists

H. R. Lovell was designated Tennessee's official artist-in-residence by House Joint Resolution 435 of 2000. The resolution stated that the official artist-in-residence will express the spirit and assets of Tennessee through his works.

Burton Callicott was designated Tennessee's official state artist by Senate Joint Resolution 118 of 1991. The resolution recognized Mr. Callicott for his many contributions to the art community in Memphis and the state of Tennessee.

Painting

The painting *Tennessee Treasures*, by Tennessee artist Michael Sloan, was designated as the official painting of Tennessee by Senate Joint Resolution 57 of the 100th General Assembly in 1997.

The painting features Tennessee's ten most recognizable symbols—raccoon, mockingbird, iris, passion wildflower, tulip poplar, Tennessee River pearl, lady bug, zebra swallowtail, largemouth bass and limestone—as well as images of the state flag, the actual geographic layout of the state, a gold-embossed seal of the state, and the signature of Tennessee's first governor, John Sevier.

Distinguished Service Medal

The “Tennessee Distinguished Service Medal” was created in May 1979 by House Joint Resolution 239 of the 91st General Assembly. The medal was presented in a special ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery and placed on display in the Memorial Amphitheater. The display case is framed with wood from the tulip poplar, Tennessee’s state tree. The following citation appears on the display:

“This medal is hereby posthumously dedicated to the memory of all veterans of Tennessee who have given their lives in the defense of our nation and the Volunteer State.”

Aviation Hall of Fame

The Tennessee Aviation Hall of Fame, located at the Gatlingburg-Pigeon Forge Airport in Sevier County, was designated as the official state aviation hall of fame by Chapter 78 of the Public Acts of 2001. The Hall of Fame was founded for the purpose of honoring aviation pioneers and leaders in Tennessee.



Tennessee Treasures